

# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

Summer Issue 2016

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**VISION: Productive Lands Healthy Environment — MISSION: Helping People Help the Land**



Scotty Herriman places a trusting hand on the no-till drill he viewed with such skepticism for decades. Today, he often leads the state in dryland no-till corn yields. He serves as Area III Commissioner for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and board member for Nowata County Conservation District.

## Soil Health: “Ugly” Fields have Higher Yields

Back in 2009, you couldn’t pay Scotty Herriman to try no-till. “Our bottomland is tight, heavy clay,” he insisted. “It won’t work here.”

Scotty has been growing corn, soybeans, wheat and milo on 2,000 acres in Nowata County, Oklahoma for over 50 years, so it’s generally wise to take his word when it comes to farming. But Scotty is the first to acknowledge he misjudged no-till. Six years into his total no-till conversion, now he says “it will work here, and I’ve proved it.”

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# “Ugly” Fields Have Higher Yields...continued from cover.

As is the unfortunate truth for many producers, it took a series of disasters to get Scotty to consider changing from the conventional farming practices he had used for decades. He had seen others try no-till as early as the 1970s, but even during the severe drought of 1980-1981, Scotty doubted the cost-effective and water-saving system. He was convinced a chisel was necessary to break up his soil, and the cost of a no-till drill was a gamble that outweighed the potential benefit.

“The drought was tough,” he said. “It was hard to get a crop and the banks weren’t in your favor. If I look back, we probably went broke twice.”

Disaster struck again in 2007 when a major flood drowned his fields. In all, he harvested a meager 13 acres that year. For two more years, Scotty fought nature and rising fuel prices by pulling a chisel behind his tractor. A visit to his local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office in 2010 finally changed his mind. He learned he could use assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to switch to no-till. Just like that, decades of conventional farming went out the window.

“We switched overnight,” Scotty said.

After the first no-till planting, Scotty’s wife, Jo, described the

farm as the ugliest in the county—referring to the crop residue that is intentionally left on the soil surface to protect the soil from erosion and temperature extremes. But the results are undeniable: the Herriman’s have cut equipment and fuel costs and reduced fertilizer usage in certain crops. Today, both Scotty and Jo have reversed their opinions on “ugly” soil. It’s the exposed soil without residue that’s really an eyesore.

Scotty’s farm is now a leader in the state for corn yields. In his second year of no-till, he placed first in the no-till/strip till dryland division for Oklahoma in the National Corn Growers Association Corn Yield Contest. He has gone on to place first in that category for four of the past five years. When asked about the typical yield drag associated with converting to no-till, Scotty insists he didn’t experience much. While this immediate turnaround won’t be experienced by every farmer, producers across the nation can attest to the medium and long term benefits of no-till.



**In a cover crop field with standing corn residue, Scotty (right) discusses the details of planting a cover crop mix with a neighboring farmer.**



The white lump in the roots of this cover crop Austrian winter pea is a rhizobium node. These symbiotic bacteria fix nitrogen from the atmosphere into the soil and make it available for plants. Nitrogen is a critical component in fertilizer.

But Scotty isn’t done yet. “We want to push the limits of what our land can produce,” he said.

After witnessing the successes of other Oklahoma farmers such as Jimmy Emmons and Alan Mindemann, Scotty is integrating cover crops into his no-till system for the first time in 2016. In conjunction with no-till, cover crops help farmers simulate a natural plant ecosystem on cropland, and Scotty believes it’s the next step to driving his yields even higher while investing in his soil health. This year’s cover crop is made possible through Scotty’s partnership with Oklahoma State University (OSU), which was awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) to study what influence various cover crops and crop mixes have on soybean and corn productivity.

“The roots are adding structure and allowing air to get into the soil,” said Dr. Jason Warren, OSU soil and water conservation/management extension specialist.

We’ll learn more about the impact of that added soil structure and air when Scotty harvests soybeans later this year.

**Read more conservation success stories at NRCS’s new blog: [www.blogs.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.blogs.nrcs.usda.gov)**



# Recruiting the Next Generation



Summer 2016 NRCS Interns

Oklahoma NRCS has brought on 19 student interns for the summer, of which two are high school students. The interns were treated to a lunch by the Oklahoma Civil Rights Advisory Committee at Boomer Lake. A presentation of the rainfall simulator was provided by Jeremy Dennis, Stillwater Soil Survey Office Soil Scientist. Students had a chance to visit with each other and their mentors as a group for the first time this summer.

During a separate meeting in Stillwater, interns gave presentations on their work for NRCS and areas of interest as a culmination of their summer experience. Congratulations to all the students! We hope they had a great summer helping people help the land.



Clemon Bradford, Pryor FO District Conservationist and Oklahoma Civil Rights Advisory Committee Chairperson, discusses conservation with Jennifer Boltik, Marietta FO Intern.



Jeremy Dennis presents the rainfall simulator to summer students.



Gary O'Neill, Oklahoma State Conservationist addresses summer interns.



Blongshia Cha, Newkirk FO Intern, gives a presentation on wetland development through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership in Kay County.

Submitted by Gilbert Guerrero, Assistant State Conservationist for Outreach and Civil Rights





# Mobile Connections

## Conservation Client Gateway Updated with New Look and Mobile Support

The banner features a laptop on the left displaying a rural landscape. The background is a large image of a rolling green field with a dirt road under a blue sky with clouds. The USDA logo is at the top center. The text 'NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE' is above 'CLIENT GATEWAY', which is above 'CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE IS JUST A CLICK AWAY'. A mouse cursor points to the word 'CLICK'.

USDA  
United States Department of Agriculture

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
**CLIENT GATEWAY**  
CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE IS JUST A **CLICK** AWAY

**Client Gateway** is a new public website that allows clients secure ability to request conservation technical and financial assistance from the USDA.

Through **Client Gateway**, clients can also access their:

- conservation plans,
- conservation program applications and contracts,
- financial assistance contract payments,
- and much more.

**ONLINE FEATURES**  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway)  
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

- REQUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
- APPLY FOR CONSERVATION PROGRAM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- REVIEW, SIGN, AND SUBMIT APPLICATIONS, CONTRACTS, AND CONSERVATION PLANS
- TRACK PAYMENTS DUE CLIENTS

Conservation Client Gateway is an online tool that allows landowners to interact with their local NRCS office from the convenience of their home computer or mobile phone.

Now featuring a new look and mobile support, Conservation Client Gateway is easier to use and offers 24/7 access to your conservation plans.

To sign up, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway) and click “Get Started.”

### With Conservation Client Gateway, you can:

- Review and sign your conservation plans and other documents
- Document completed practices and request practice certification
- Request and track payments for completed contract items
- Store and retrieve your conservation files
- Request technical and financial assistance



# Pollards for Pollinators

My wife Laura serves on the church's environmental stewardship committee. They have managed a church vegetable garden for the past five years or so. This year Laura made the suggestion that the garden be converted to a pollinator garden to participate in the Year of the Pollinator. Everyone liked the idea and it has been a great success so far.

Funds to purchase the plants were raised at Easter. Instead of congregants purchasing Easter lilies in honor or memory of a family member or friend, donated funds were used to purchase the pollinator plants. We have a master gardener in the church who researched and purchased the pollinator plants and designed the garden layout. We have a Xerces pollinator garden sign which is visible from the city street that is next to the garden.

On Earth Day Sunday as part of the children's moment in the worship service, butterflies that we had raised from larvae were released. This is also when we distributed the pollinator materials generously provided by NRCS.

Of note the day we planted the garden we had butterflies showing up on site before all the plants were in the ground. That was very cool.



Laura Pollard stands in the pollinator garden she helped plant at the church the Pollards attend.

Submitted by Ben Pollard, OCC Assistant Director (retired)

# Kingfisher Conservation Education Day



Kingfisher County Conservation District and NRCS hosted an annual Conservation Education Day for all the 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the county on April 20 and 21. Approximately 285 children learned about conservation at seven different booths. Booths included Soil Health, Water Quality, Recycling, Skins and Skulls, Wetlands, Earthquakes and Forestry.

Submitted by Brandon Burns  
Kingfisher FO District Conservationist

# Seminole Nation Supports Monarchs



The Seminole Nation called for volunteers to assist with planting 2,500 green antelope horn milk weed plants. Staff from the NRCS Wewoka Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department Tishomingo office, members of the Chickasaw Nation and a host of volunteers from around Seminole County showed up to plant milkweed for the monarch butterfly. In all, about 30 volunteers of

all ages showed up. Planting took place at the Seminole Nation Mission on the west side of the baseball fields and at the new Veterans Cemetery. In addition to planting, mulch was spread around the plants curtesy of Clausing Feed Store in Seminole, then all the plants received a healthy dose of water to get them started. Lunch was provided for all of the volunteers by the Seminole Nation.

Submitted by Thomas E. James  
Wewoka FO District Conservationist



# Districts Celebrate 75 Years of Conservation

Dewey and Rogers County Conservation Districts celebrated 75 years of conservation this year. Each district hosted a banquet for producers, partners and board members past and present in their respective counties. The continuing operation of Oklahoma's conservation districts despite dire state finances and disruptive forces in agricultural communities sets Oklahoma apart from many other states, and serves as a testament to the vitality of the conservation movement in Oklahoma and the tenacity of its advocates. Congratulations Dewey and Rogers CCDs!



Members of the Dewey CCD board and staff at their 75th Anniversary Banquet.



George Stunkard, Wagoner CCD Director, Trey Lam, OCC Executive Director, Scotty Herriman, OCC Area III Commissioner and Ben Pollard, OCC Assistant Director (retired) attended the Rogers CCD Banquet.



Gary O'Neill, Oklahoma State Conservationist speaks at Rogers CCD 75th Anniversary Banquet.

## Rogers County Outdoor Classroom

Rogers County Conservation District hosts conservation education events throughout the year at the Conservation

Education Reserve on the campus of Rogers State University. In May, hundreds of elementary school students assembled for a special concert by Billy B, a conservation and science educator specializing in sharing the wonders of the natural world through music. Above, Billy B performs in an amphitheater full of students. Right, students run a relay race designed to demonstrate the amount of water the average U.S. home uses in a day.





# Secrets of Soil Health in Altus



**John Dee Butchee, Jackson CCD Manager, presents the rainfall simulator.**

Boman, and NRCS Soil Scientist, Tyson Morley, presented on benefits of no-till and best management practices to control erosion and promote soil health. Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison, covered the Monarch and StrikeForce Initiative and the importance of agriculture census. Willard Tillman, Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, covered the eastern red cedar and uses for the biomass once the invasive species has been removed. NRCS Pathways Interns, Kendra Reining, Waurika Field Office, and Sarah McLaughlin, Duncan Field Office, attended the workshop as a training experience.

“When our partners come together to hold these types of workshops for our local producers to gain knowledge regarding their resource concerns and identify the USDA program opportunities available to them, it is win-win for all,” said Skiles.

Submitted by Dr. Carol Crouch, State Tribal Liaison and Don Skiles, Altus FO District Conservationist

## Feds Feed Families...for Ice Cream



As part of its annual Feds Feed Families food drive for local shelters and food banks, NRCS state office employees enjoyed ice cream in exchange for food drive donations.

It's not all about the ice cream, though. NRCS in Oklahoma has so far raised over 100 pounds of food for Wings of Hope Family Crisis Services in Stillwater. Field offices are also encouraged to collect food for local charities.

Food banks typically see increased demand from the public and fewer donations during the summer. A part of the reason for this is children from families in need are out of school in the summer and the larger public traditionally donates during the fall and winter holidays. Feds Feed Families is a nationwide food drive that allows employees to lend a hand during these critical months.



**Dick Zetterberg, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, wears a ravenous grin as he scoops vanilla ice cream into his bowl.**

# Barnitz Creek Dam 11 Gets Final Inspection, Approval



Hydro-seeding on the dam auxiliary spillway slope is an effective method of quickly establishing vegetation, thereby reducing the risk of erosion on the dam.

Final inspection for the rehabilitation of Barnitz Creek Flood Control Dam #11 was held on March 16, 2016. The dam is located in Dewey County, about six miles west and two miles south of the small town of Putnam. The work was contracted through an agreement with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) and Dewey County Conservation District. The rehabilitation work was performed by J. W. Gallup Construction of Stratford. The rehabilitation consisted of installing a new principal spillway inlet tower and conduit, with a concrete impact basin. The auxiliary spillway was widened to a total of 165 feet. The site was vegetated using hydro-seeding and hydro-mulching with common reed grass plantings on the wave berm.

Rehabilitation is critical for many of Oklahoma's aging flood control dams. Over 50 percent of these 2,107 dams are in excess of their 50 year design life. While these dams continue to protect lives and property downstream thanks to operation and maintenance by OCC and the conservation districts, continued use without necessary upgrades could degrade their effectiveness at reducing floods.

Submitted by Rick Lane, NRCS Water Resources Civil Engineer

## Engineering Bootcamp

On June 13-17, 2016, the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Engineering for Conservation Planning training course, also known as Engineering Bootcamp, was held at the Redlands Community College Royse Ranch Campus in El Reno. Sixteen students—five soil conservationists, nine soil conservation technicians and two agricultural engineers—participated in the training course. During this week long course, they were introduced to the many facets of conservation engineering. For example, the students were taught basic surveying skills during field exercises and introduced to hydrology and hydraulic concepts that can be used to plan, design, and implement many different conservation practices. Their knowledge was tested near the end of the course through a field review affectionately known as the Conservation Olympics.

The Redlands Community College Royse Ranch Campus was an outstanding and convenient facility for both classroom activities and field exercises for the course. The students even got the opportunity to observe a potential resource concern area that exists at the ranch, and then brainstormed potential alternatives for addressing the resource concern.



**Engineering Bootcamp students, front row: Hannah Spilter, David Hannon, Hunter Lancaster, Jim Harris, Reed Yule, Payton Mumford, Sam Fox, Merica Xiong. Back row: Axel Barner, Ryan Rich, Marcus Griffin, Chris Clemens, Jim Blakley, LeRoy Arnold, Sean Mallory. Not pictured: Chism Horton.**

Submitted by Scott Schneider, NRCS Agricultural Engineer



# Flood Control Keeps Staff On-Call



**Floodwater flowing through the auxiliary spillway of Maysville Lateral Dam B3 and around a home built just beneath this high hazard dam.**

I remember that Sunday morning very well, June 12, 2016. I woke up around 6:00 a.m. due to the weather. I watched a couple news channels and both were talking about localized flooding around the Maysville area. They were reporting rainfall of eight inches and greater. I decided to go check at least Maysville Lateral Dam B3 because it's right on Highway 19 with the house that was built at the end of the auxiliary spillway. What would have been an easy 30 minute drive from my house turned into a two-and-a-half hour adventure. Highway 19, all blacktop county roads and dirt roads between Pauls Valley and Maysville were either closed or had water running over so deep, I couldn't get through. I finally arrived in Maysville at 10:00 and the Maysville Police and Fire Departments had been evacuating people, since before daylight. I assessed flood control sites Maysville Lateral B3, B4 and B6 and determined them all flowing through their auxiliary spillways. They were all functioning properly and there was no real concern unless it kept raining. I informed Chuck Pyka, Garvin Conservation District Watershed Aide, and Dennis Boney, Oklahoma Conservation Commission Watershed Technician, of the situation.

They decided to check the other DamWatch tickets they had received and then Dennis came to Maysville later in the day. I informed my supervisor that we had a high hazard dam flowing through the emergency spillway. The Garvin County Emergency Management had Incident Command set up at the Maysville Fire Station. I checked-in with them and assisted them by giving continuous updates on the structures as Beef Creek continued to rise. At around 2:00 p.m., Beef Creek finally started to recede. By 4:00, Highway 19 was open again. I wish I knew how many time those dams were walked across and the depths of water in the spillways were measured. It was a lot!

There are six Maysville Lateral B dams that were built on Beef Creek, which runs through Maysville. The dams are ML B1, B3, B4, B5, B6 and B7. B1 is located three miles west of town, but the other five all lie within one mile south of town. These five sites all flowed through their auxiliary spillways. B3 is the only one classified as high hazard, as it has the house that was built at the end of the auxiliary spillway. During the height of the storm, B3 had about 1.5 feet of water flowing through the auxiliary spillway. The water was about 1.5 feet high on the east side of the house, but water never got into the house. B4 washed out two county roads and two driveways downstream. There were about 10 homes that lost road access due to the wash outs. Dams B5, B6, and B7 all flowed about one foot deep in their auxiliary spillways, causing little concern.

I can't image how bad the flooding in Maysville would have been, if the flood control dams on Beef Creek weren't there.

Submitted by Brandon Chandler, Pauls Valley FO District Conservationist

## Outreach Briefs



**Danielle Metz, Anadarko FO District Conservationist and Shelly Bookout, Earth Team Volunteer, staffed the NRCS outreach booth at the Delaware Tribe's Summer Fest.**



**USDA staff met with Cheyenne Arapaho Tribal directors to identify ways the groups can work together.**

**Attendees at the Durant Feral Hog and StrikeForce Workshop**





# NRCS Pride

NRCS had an outreach booth at the 2016 Oklahoma City Pride Parade on June 26.

I heard stories of peoples agriculture upbringing, I heard about peoples backyard gardens, I heard from the typical old grumpy farmers that think NRCS “stinks”, I heard from high school and college students that want to work for the USDA and families that were just so surprised and happy USDA was at Pride.

I wish I could do justice for one individual’s testimonial to me. He was just so overjoyed to talk farming with me. He had grown up on a farm and felt shunned by the small community because of his sexual orientation, and now, talking with me about wheat harvests and working ground, he was able to relive fond memories.



Submitted by Josh McNeff, Oklahoma City FO Soil Conservation Technician and LGBT Program Manager

# Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

May was Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month. The theme was “Walk Together, Embrace Differences, Build Legacies.” Cassandra Sites, Financial Resource Specialist, and Birdie Neal, Contracting Services Specialist, at the Stillwater state office celebrated by setting up a display which featured books related to Japanese interment and the Japanese-American soldiers who fought in Europe during WWII. Alongside the display was “Smiles” who was channeling his inner Menehune. In Hawaiian legend, Menehunes were a group of mischievous small people or dwarfs who were master builders and constructed ponds and irrigation ditches. Available to sample were bowls of taro chips and macadamia nuts, which are Hawaiian agricultural products.



AAPI Heritage Month breakroom display at NRCS state office.

Did you know Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest growing community in the United States? There are six major AA/PI ethnic groups:

- Central Asians
- East Asians
- Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders
- Southeast Asians
- South Asians
- West Asians

Our nation’s story would not be complete without the voices of AA/PIs who have called the land we all love home. Thank you for those who took time to celebrate this heritage month.

Submitted by Mercia Xiong, Jay FO Soil Conservationist and Civil Rights Advisory Committee Asian-Pacific Program Manager



# Eastern Oklahoma Ag Trade Show



The Poteau, Sallisaw, Stigler, and Wilburton NRCS field offices in partnership with the conservation districts in LeFlore, Latimer, Haskell and Sequoyah Counties, Haskell/LeFlore Farm Service Agency, and LeFlore County OSU Extension conducted their 10th Annual Eastern Oklahoma Ag Trade Show at the LeFlore County Fairgrounds near Poteau on April 19.

The event attracted over 25 vendor booths and 200 attendees. Information was provided pertaining to agricultural equipment and supplies, financial assistance, farm bill programs and available USDA services including the StrikeForce Initiative. Speakers gave presentations about the upcoming Vet Feed Directive, as well as poultry topics for

both undergraduate and graduate level continuing education credits. Each of the speakers opened the floor up for a question and answer session at the end of their presentations.

Other partner's co-sponsoring the event included: Oklahoma AG Credit, The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, OK Foods, OSU Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, LeFlore County Cattlemen's Association, and KTCS 99.9FM.

Submitted by Donna Neumeyer, Poteau FO District Conservationist

## Sequoyah County Ag Show and Soil Health Workshop

Sequoyah County Ag show and conservation workshop was a huge success. On May 26, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council and the Sequoyah County Conservation District partnered to hold a conservation workshop and dinner for producers, Tribes, tribal members and women in agriculture. The workshop was held at the Sequoyah County Fairgrounds.

Submitted by Dr. Carol Crouch, State Tribal Liaison and Clint Fleharty, Sallisaw FO Soil Conservationist



## Blair Water Fair

On Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 the Altus Field Office USDA-NRCS and Jackson County Conservation District partnered with the OSU Extension Office to participate as instructors for the Blair Schools Water Fair. There were approximately 70 students that attended the fair. These students ranged from third to sixth grade. There were six stations for the students to circulate through that all dealt with water use or conservation. There were six instructors which included Belinda Dimitratos, Jackson County Conservation District Secretary and Brandon Taylor, Altus FO Soil Conservationist. Belinda's station focused on teaching the students about the water cycle. Brandon's station focused on the web of conservation and how to help conserve water in and around the house. The other stations focused on aquifers and how they operate, a water memory game, homemade rainfall simulator and a water obstacle course. This was a very educational and fun day for both the students and instructors.

Submitted by Brandon Taylor, Altus FO Soil Conservationist



# World's Muddiest Academic Contest Introduces Students to Soil and Range Health

With mud caked boots, furrowed brows and dusty clipboards, over 500 high school students hushedly sidestep each other through a maze of tiny plastic flags and trenches cut into the bright red soil of the Oklahoma prairie. The peculiar scene has been a May tradition in the outskirts of Oklahoma City for 65 years.

The National Land and Range Judging Contest is the culmination of local and state contests where FFA and 4-H teams use their knowledge of soil science and rangeland ecology to evaluate the land for agricultural and residential uses. At the national level, the best teams from over 30 states compete for the championship trophy. Along with several state agencies and organizations including the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and conservation districts, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) technical staff have helped run and officiate the contest from the beginning.

"This contest is an excellent opportunity to introduce youth to the land from a management and technical perspective. For kids who are already interested in natural resources, this gives them a solid scientific foundation to continue pursuing their interests," says Steve Alspach, NRCS state soil scientist for Oklahoma.

Perhaps no one understands the unique impact of the contest better than Don Bartolina, retired NRCS district conservationist for Oklahoma County. He got involved with the contest when he began working for NRCS as a soil scientist in 1961. By 1985, Don was contest coordinator—responsible for making sure all the moving parts of the contest come together—and he's never missed a contest.

"The contest was part of my NRCS training," says Don. "When you're out there and the kids are asking questions, that's when you learn."

In his time with the contest, at least 27,000 students have traveled to Oklahoma to compete, but for him, it's not just about the competition, it's about introducing youth to the natural world. He admits many of the competitors won't go on to be involved in agriculture, but thinks there's still value in their participation.

"It gives kids an appreciation for the land," he says. "When you think of all the state and local contests that lead up to this, the number of students and coaches involved, it's rewarding to know you've had some impact on their lives."

The contest is comprised of three events held concurrently at the same secret location. In the land judging event, contestants enter several three to five foot deep pits to evaluate the qualities of the soil and determine its potential for agricultural production. Range judging contestants rotate through roped off rangeland sites to identify plant species and determine the site's value for cattle production and quail habitat. Homesite evaluation challenges contestants to determine the value of a site for residential development.

Don is quick to remind people that while he's the coordinator, it takes the time and resources of numerous organizations to make the contest possible. To touch so many lives every year requires the close cooperation of several public and private partners.

"It's a labor of love," says Don. "There's not another contest with this many people from so many places working for the same thing. I hope it continues and I hope new people can get involved and keep it going."

With the 65<sup>th</sup> annual contest, now under his belt, Don can look to other volunteer activities he participates in for Oklahoma County Conservation District and, of course, planning for next year's contest.



**The 2016 National Land and Range Judging Contest marks the 55<sup>th</sup> contest Don Bartolina has assisted with, and the 31<sup>st</sup> he has coordinated. Pictured, he stands in a soil pit among several contestants practicing their land judging skills on the first of two practice days ahead of the official contest.**



# Oklahoma NRCS employee updates:

## RETIREMENTS

**Chris Goedecke**, Tishomingo and Madill  
FO District Conservationist, June 2016

## NEW HIRES, NEW POSITIONS

**Lori Etheredge** selected as State Office  
Cartographer/GIS Specialist, August 2016

**Sarah Foulks**, Elyon contract employee,  
selected as Program Analyst on the State  
Office Programs Staff, June 2016

**Ryan Jones** selected as Resource  
Specialist for Zone 3 at Clinton TSO, May  
2016

**Matt Ward** selected as Resource  
Specialist for Zone 2, May 2016

**Andy Bennett** selected as Resource  
Conservationist, CSP Program Manager  
on the State Office Programs staff, July  
2016

**Eric Ramerth** selected as Medford FO  
Soil Conservationist, June 2016.

**Joshua Hall** selected as Fairview FO  
Soil Conservationist through Pathways  
Student Program, May 2016

**Trenton Inselman** selected as Guthrie  
FO Soil Conservationist through Pathways  
Student Program, May 2016

**Liana Jones** selected as Wilburton FO  
Soil Conservationist, June 2016

## Greener Pastures

**Joy Alspach**, EQIP Program Manager,  
transferred to FSA

**Brian Dillard**, Stillwater and Pauls  
Valley Watershed Office Project Engineer  
transferred to Army Corps of Engineers

## Temporary Details

**Tiffany Green**, Clinton FO Soil  
Conservationist, is Cordell FO Acting  
District Conservationist until further notice

**Matt Elliott**, Stillwater FO District  
Conservationist, is acting Program Liaison  
for Zone 2 until further notice

**Jami McVeigh**, Marietta FO Soil  
Conservationist is Tishomingo and Madill  
FO Acting District Conservationist until  
further notice

**Charles Winslett**, Frederick FO Soil  
Conservationist, is Frederick FO Acting  
District Conservationist until further notice

**Rick Lane**, State Office Planning  
Engineer, is Acting Project Engineer for  
the Pauls Valley and Stillwater Watershed  
Offices until further notice

**Brooke Taylor**, Program Liaison for  
Zone 1, is Acting EQIP Program Manager  
at the State Office until further notice

*Please submit articles to: [robert.hathorne@ok.usda.gov](mailto:robert.hathorne@ok.usda.gov)*